

# GEORGIA'S CCDF GRANT FUND SPENDING PLAN SUMMARY

The Georgia Department of Early Care & Learning (DECAL) has received an additional \$93 million in discretionary funding from the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF). The agency will use the funds to: raise child care quality and increase access to high-quality early childhood education, with an emphasis on infant-toddler care; expand inclusion services; increase workforce professional learning supports; and maintain high safety standards. The funding plan supports DECAL's strategic priorities and its commitment to bolstering Georgia's families, early education programs, and the workforce.

Specifically, DECAL will use the additional CCDF Funds to:

## **1. Increase the Base Reimbursement Rate for Infant-Toddler Care**

DECAL is raising the base reimbursement rate for infant-toddler care to the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile of the 2016 Market Rate Survey. This is a 14% increase. The higher reimbursement rates will create financial incentives for providers to serve infants and toddlers, which in turn increases access to affordable infant-toddler care for families. The increased rates will take effect on January 1, 2019.

## **2. Increase Tier Reimbursement Rates for Providers with a 1-, 2-, or 3-Star Quality Rating**

DECAL is increasing tier reimbursement rates to 10, 20, and 40% of the payment rate for 1-, 2-, and 3-star Quality Rated providers, respectively. This is an increase from the previous rates of 5, 10, and 25%. This increase supports providers committed to raising quality and helps DECAL ensure that all eligible providers serving families receiving CAPS scholarships earn a star rating by December 31, 2020. The increased tier rates take effect on October 1, 2018.

## **3. Reduce Family Fees for Families Receiving Childcare and Parent Services Scholarships (CAPS)**

Families receiving CAPS will not be assessed a family fee that exceeds 7% of their annual family income, no matter how many children are in care. Currently, families commonly pay between 8 and 18%, and potentially as high as 26%, of their income in fees, depending on their income bracket and the number of children in care. Many families will pay lower than 7% of annual family income as a new streamlined fee calculation process takes effect. This new simplified calculation means that families will pay a much smaller percentage, either 0, 3, 5, or 7%, of their income, depending on federal poverty guidelines for their family size. The new, lower fee ceiling makes child care more affordable for families, giving their children access to the early education and care they need for academic, social-emotional, and physical development. The reduced family fees will take effect September 17, 2018.

## **4. Expand the Number of Quality Rated Subsidy Grant (QRSG) Slots and Increase QRSG Reimbursement Rates to 50% Above the Base Reimbursement Rate.**

DECAL is adding 500 QRSG slots at a select number of current and new providers that meet QRSG criteria, bringing the total number of slots to 3,000. Slots are being added in all regions of the state. DECAL is also substantially increasing the reimbursement rates for providers with QRSG slots to provide 50% above the base reimbursement rate. Since QRSG providers agree to

meet higher quality standards, increasing the number of slots provides additional families access to high-quality care. Increasing the reimbursement rate to providers supports programs in meeting higher quality standards. The increased rates will take effect October 1, 2018, and the process for filling the new slots is currently underway.

## **5. Increase Supports for Teachers in Addressing Children's Social-Emotional Needs**

DECAL is reorganizing and expanding its inclusion services to reflect the need for support focused on fostering positive social-emotional development, reducing challenging behavior, addressing trauma care, and improving classroom climate in early education environments. This new multi-tiered system of supports will: 1) establish a centralized intake line that will triage and route cases to appropriate levels of support; 2) target professional development to train staff on proactive approaches to preventing challenging behavior; 3) increase the number of inclusion specialists across the state; and 4) add behavior support specialists across the state. This system will strengthen social-emotional support for early childhood professionals, families, and children to significantly reduce challenging behaviors and reduce incidents of suspension and expulsion. These new supports will be phased in during the next federal fiscal year (October 1, 2018 – September 30, 2019).

## **6. Expand Workforce Professional Development and Learning Supports**

DECAL is offering an expanded slate of financial supports for early learning professionals who obtain advanced credentials and degrees. The agency is also creating two programs that offer bonuses, stipends, and other forms of financial support to encourage professionals to pursue advanced training and development in specialized instruction and training areas. The first of these new programs, The DECAL Scholars TEACH Program, will be targeted to professionals working in bilingual settings, infant-toddler care, and family child care; and high school students pursuing ECE credentials. The second new program, The DECAL Scholars Lead Program, will seek to develop a cadre of professionals skilled in designing and using relationship-based strategies for workforce training and development, such as professional learning communities and early learning coaching. These new financial supports will help early learning professionals continue to build skills in all workforce, knowledge, and competency areas as they move along the career pathway. These new supports will be phased in during the next federal fiscal year (October 1, 2018 – September 30, 2019).

## **7. Cover the Baseline Cost of Comprehensive Records Checks**

For the next two years DECAL will pay the cost of the initial national fingerprint scan for eligible early care and education workers. This includes new hires to the industry and/or those whose current comprehensive records check determination letter is about to expire. DECAL understands that ensuring that all employees working in child care undergo and pass a thorough background check is critically important to providing a safe environment. By funding this initial national fingerprint scan, DECAL will help to alleviate a financial burden associated with the checks thereby maintaining high safety standards throughout the industry. This will be implemented October 1, 2018.